SYNOPSIS

of the thesis titled

Radical Environmentalism and Political Thought: Wilderness Writing in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century America

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1. Introduction

The relationship between humans and nature is fundamental, influencing our well-being, culture, and survival. This bond shapes our understanding of the world and our place within it, fostering a sense of stewardship and responsibility. From providing essential resources like food and water to offering spiritual and recreational benefits, nature is integral to human life. Our interactions with the environment are deeply embedded in our history, traditions, and collective consciousness. However, human-nature contexts and interrelationships have changed drastically in the last two centuries. The primary material for this thesis represents the sentiments, economic and political angles, and motivations that still drive this change. The rich tradition of wilderness in literature depicts attitudes toward nature, environmentally conscious action, and ecological changes. The thesis is a study of how radicalism or a radical political outlook becomes necessary to fight the forces of oppression that displace men and women and take them, their livelihood, and their culture away from their geographical spaces. These findings prove that environmentalism and environmental action or activism are a function of radicalism.

This thesis examines the evolution of environmentalism in American literature through the works of Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Edward Abbey, arguing that radicalism and a radical political outlook are essential to combating the forces of oppression that threaten both human and ecological systems.

By analysing the sentiments, economic and political motivations, and literary expressions related to nature, the study highlights how environmental activism, often perceived as radical, becomes a necessary response to the displacement and exploitation perpetuated by capitalist and state-driven agendas. This thesis posits that the increasing disconnection between humans and

nature necessitates a radical approach to environmentalism to address the intertwined crises of ecological degradation and social injustice.

This thesis examines the representations of environmentalism and its evolution in American literature, focusing on selected writers such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Edward Abbey. It traces this evolution politically while identifying differences in literary expressions and language. Our contemporary world is marked by an increasing disconnect between humans and the natural world, encompassing wildernesses, jungles, forests, rivers, seas, deserts, wetlands, gardens, and farmlands. The latter two, farmlands, and the foods we consume, have undergone significant changes over the past century, presenting a central paradox of modern human life. Despite humans' dependence on the natural world for livelihood, many allocate little time to contemplate it. The primary motivation for this study is to explore this widening gap and the enduring fascination for the wild in human culture.

The texts selected for analysis in the thesis are varied tracts of fiction and non-fiction. These offer us alternative perspectives on nature, culture, and sociopolitical and historical contexts in which they are engaged. Realising the plight of those who do not have a voice, human and non-human included, is possible through literature. The non-human world of our ecology has been given a voice in the works of numerous writers. There is a vast potential to unearth the tendencies repressed in both the human and the non-human world. As Italo Calvino puts it,

> I mean aspects, situations, and languages both of the outer and of the inner world, the tendencies repressed both in individuals and in society. Literature is like an ear that can hear things beyond the understanding of the language of politics; it is like an eye that can see beyond the colour spectrum perceived by politics. (Calvino 98)

Calvino's quote speaks to that often repeated question of what literature is, its purposes, and of why we read literature. My primary materials have led me to alternate expressions of emotions, subversive tactics against the oppression of the State, and varied social imaginations to depict cruelty to nature and humans alike.

As the American conservation movement evolved into environmentalism and ecology, visible in the form of increased responsiveness and a sense of responsibility toward pure air and clean water, and gathers momentum, there formed a broader picture of the well-being and preservation of the forest, ocean, mountain ecosystems of the world; which builds into a concern for the wilderness. Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) sits on one end of the spectrum of ecological literature. It unravels to us the horrors of chemicals aimed at pests, which had become a bane to the world, on all living organisms with fatal consequences. On the other end of the spectrum, there is the bitterly fought and politicised climate change debate. The debate, more of a fight in the political arena, foregrounded by the IPCC's (International Panel for Climate Change) SR15 Policy Recommendations, and carrying dark prophecies for humanity, represents the other end of the spectrum of the environmental struggle. Below this spectrum, is the radical literature of extreme eco-defense, defined by the term "monkeywrenching," which advocates the sabotage of any organisation, government, or machinery that threatens the environment and wilderness.

In the modern world, there is a parallel between abuse of ecology and the endangering of human rights. The marginalised who survive on the fringes are continually threatened, their very existence and sustenance endangered, and their homes continually on the brink of destruction, as the State frontier moves on with its train of consequences. The factors threatening the

marginalised are rampant capitalism driven by a resource development ideology, the accompanying suppressive tactics, and the subsequent climate change. It becomes a social justice issue because the consequences of climate change are borne more by those who least contribute to it (Carson 2).

Nature is either a potential or a commodity itself for resource developers. Thus, exploitation continues till the source is fully drained. Climate change and resource development both create refugees. This scenario hinges on many current and future discourses, political economies, and public policies. Climate refugees and climate literacy must be addressed by policymakers, artists, educators, and various forms of media. Academicians perceive wilderness in their original way, owing to the training in their respective fields, just like every different person sees it differently. Historians are trained to study culture rather than forest ecosystems (more appropriately, the province of scientists). Thus even environmental history often focuses more on reconstructing past human perceptions and ideas than on reconstructing ecosystems. It is a mistake to read into that focus the assumption that human perceptions create reality. Though as perceptions go, humanities are as much a study or a way to understand humans through their culture, attitudes, and practices. An analysis of their perceptions of wilderness as seen through the lenses of literature and culture is the idea behind this study.

1.1. Importance of the study

The study brings together concepts like ecological awareness, ecosophy, and the idea of alienation from nature, as well as figures like the anti-machine ecological activist or the Neo-Luddite. By recontextualizing these concepts, it offers a fresh perspective on the human condition in today's industrialised world.

Understanding the human condition better can lead to more accessible solutions. The environmental crisis, displacement of populations, and species extinction are all critical issues. Experts agree that the situation will continue to worsen over time. While national governments play a significant role in policy decisions, this study also suggests that individuals can adopt alternative lifestyles to avoid contributing to the problem, even if they can't solve it entirely. Although literary research may not directly influence policies as much as scientific or technological research, it still offers valuable insights into addressing pressing environmental challenges. Still, research in humanities has its effect, as Lawrence Buell writes,

> [A]lthough the creative and critical arts may seem remote from the arenas of scientific investigation and public policy, they are exercising, however unconsciously, an influence upon the emerging culture of environmental concern, just as they have played a part in shaping as well as merely expressing every other aspect of human culture." (Buell, "Foreword" 3)

1.2. Theories

In his 1990 essay called "Postscript on the Societies of Control," Giles Deleuze articulates how the control mechanism of the state has entered a new era, an era he called the "society of control." Deleuze contends that modernity has transformed how the State views its subject and how technology has aided surveillance. "Societies of control," Deleuze says, are "in the process of replacing disciplinary societies" (Deleuze 4). We see State power gradually expanding its wings and its surveillance capacity, proceeding from the pre-modern sovereign societies to the

"disciplinary societies," and further to the present "societies of control." What is sinister about this kind of control is that while the State's capability to monitor and track and record us increases phenomenally, there is an apparent notion of increased security and space. The corporations and the State have access to our most private data and personal secrets; the actual physical space for coming together and carrying out a conversation to affect real-world change in society diminishes rapidly. Not only are the social spaces quickly disappearing, but also the capacity for dialogues. The State can, at any time without any physical intervention, shut down our credit cards, our email and social media accounts, and our electronic sustenance, the moment it unilaterally decides that we are dissenters or criminals. There is a kind of prescience in Deleuze's observation which was written in 1990, and the internet juggernaut was still to follow.

The above concept is critical to understand because it is directly related to an individual's tendency to uphold their values and fight for them, which in many cases might not align with that of the State's. For example, in recent times in India, we have seen a slew of ecological and social activists being branded as "eco-terrorists." The State tends to control any action that might threaten its legitimacy and its sources of generation of wealth. Deleuze, individually and along with Guattari, has postulated concepts that easily lend to ecological thought. They helped connect the invisible dots of State power, the people, and the natural world. They provide methods and models conducive to free thinking, dissenting strategies, and novel ways of analysing the human relationships to nature. Most of these are postulated in the duo's seminal book *A Thousand Plateaus* (1976). Their work aims to construct novel ways of seeing one's relation and position concerning the State and to efficiently provide frameworks for questioning their relationship with power. It is this quality that I have found helpful in exploring and

analysing relations within the dominant frame. These concepts have been of great use in reading Edward Abbey's works and finding new avenues of meaning.

Marx's concept of alienation has answered, to a great extent, I would say, the endless questions about the disconnect of the individual with nature, society, and the "self" and why the disconnect or distance from nature creates dissatisfaction and prevents one from feeling whole. He strikes at the root of increasing discontent. The subtext in the capitalistic discourses and their abstract assumptions are that we live in the most developed times and under the auspices of industrialism. But they do not answer the question of "alienation" or why a full day of work can leave us feeling unsatisfied if work is the fulfilment of the "species-being." What role does "nature" play in this? Marx provides a straightforward and comprehensive answer to this. Marx writes:

> Nature is man's inorganic body – that is, insofar as it is not itself the human body. Man lives on nature – which means that nature is his body, with which he must remain in continuous interchange if he is not to die. That man's physical and spiritual life is linked to nature means simply that nature is linked to itself, for man is a part of nature. (Marx 31)

In its modern form, labour inherently alienates man from himself, his fellow beings, nature, and his work or the material that he produces. Marx does not imply here that industrial capitalism causes "alienation" but only that the gap between these organic entities has deepened in its present form of industrial capitalism. A renewed connection to nature, labour, self, and society would inject the elements of satisfaction and happiness. Marx's proposition is a way of perceiving the object of production as a record of human activity and labour. Here Marx alludes to what Adam Smith called the vile maxim, "all for ourselves, and nothing for other people." The

vision thus is a society in which normal human instincts of goodness, mutualism, community cooperation, and solidarity prevail to defeat this "vile maxim."

Marx's humanism also reflects in his criticism of effect that technology has and will bring in the system of production, labour, and nature in the future. In *Capital: Volume I* (1867), he writes about how capitalism and industry, aided by technology, deteriorate the conditions and value of the labourer's life and that of the soil in nature. It also renders apart the relationship of the human to the soil, i.e., prevents the return to the soil of its elements consumed by man in the form of food and clothing; it violates the conditions necessary for the lasting fertility of the soil. This action destroys, at the same time, the town labourer's health and the rural labourer's intellectual life (285).

Modern writers like Rachel Carson and Edward Abbey would mainly consent to Marx's and Deleuze's theory of the effect of technology on human and nature alike, and their changing relationship. Gigantic leaps in technology and machines have only accelerated this effect multi-fold. Their postulation of human alienation, the extraordinary powers of the modern nation-state laced with cutting-edge military and surveillance technology, and the immense capacity to raze down the wilderness provide a solid framework to examine literature and the cinematic portrayal of the art of ecodefense. This changing model of State power and Deleuze's "control society" helps explain the behaviour of our dissenting, nomadic, roving philosopher-like characters in Edward Abbey's writings. While protesting, striking, and activism are held paramount by Marx and Thoreau, Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy is conducive to artists, activists, and dissenters by its very structure and anatomy.

1.3. Plan of the Study

This thesis investigates the evolution of environmentalism in literature by examining key American and Indian authors, exploring the interplay between radicalism and ecological consciousness. The first chapter introduces the study and provides a comprehensive literature survey on the concept of wilderness, setting the stage for a nuanced analysis of how environmental thought has developed over time. The second chapter delves into the works of Henry David Thoreau, focusing on his major writings like *Walden* and *Civil Disobedience*, to highlight his philosophical reflections on nature and their impact on American environmentalism. The third chapter examines John Muir's political and literary transformation, analysing his contributions to the American conservation movement through works such as *My First Summer in the Sierra* and *The Yosemite* and some other works. The fourth chapter explores the radical politics and literature of Edward Abbey, with a focus on *Desert Solitaire* and *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, to understand the rise of radical environmental activism. The fifth chapter shifts the focus to regional Indian literature, analysing Sarah Joseph's *Gift in Green,* Akinneni Kutumbarao's *Slowly Dies a Lake*, K.P. Purnachandra Tejasvi's *Carvalho*, and B.P. Koirala's *Sumnima*. This comparative analysis contrasts the historiography of American environmental writing from the early nineteenth to the twentieth century with the literature of the Global South, represented by these Indian authors, to uncover common themes and divergent perspectives on nature, culture, and socio-political contexts.

This thesis focuses on Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Edward Abbey due to their foundational roles in American environmental thought, diverse literary contributions, and significant historical and cultural impacts. Thoreau's philosophical prose in works like *Walden* emphasises self-reliance and a spiritual connection to nature, influencing civil rights movements

and environmental ethics. Muir, known as the "Father of the National Parks," through his poetic and passionate writings, advocated for wilderness preservation, leading to the establishment of national parks and founding the Sierra Club. Abbey's provocative and radical narratives, exemplified in *Desert Solitaire* and *The Monkey Wrench Gang*, promote eco-sabotage and direct action against industrial encroachment, inspiring radical environmental movements. Representing different eras and movements within American environmental discourse—Thoreau in the 19th century transcendentalist movement, Muir in the progressive conservation movement of the late 19th to early 20th century, and Abbey in the radical environmentalism of the mid to late 20th century— these authors provide a diachronic view of the development of environmental thought. Their interdisciplinary relevance, intersecting literature, philosophy, politics, and environmental science, along with their enduring legacy in contemporary environmental discourse, underscores their selection for this comprehensive study on the evolution of ecological consciousness and activism in American literature.

2. Henry David Thoreau

Henry David Thoreau addressing the Concord Lyceum in 1851 (in a speech later made famous as an essay called “Walking”), claimed to “speak a word for nature.” (*Thoreau, Walden, and Other Writings* 100) His claim, he said, would be extreme. Thoreau’s “Walking” begins in noticeable ways. In the essay, just like the Lyceum speech that it is adapted from, he begins by first alienating himself from the rest of the gathering. What is confessed as “extreme” by him is reflected when he pits himself and nature against the whole gathering as the “civilization.” And in it lies the political kernel of the advocacy for the wilderness. Beginning with Thoreau in literature, wilderness manifests in physicality and aesthetics. Still, it manifests politically, as a

metaphor for freedom, as a sanctuary to runaways oppressed by the system and the State, and as a sanctuary for people of all walks of life looking for solitude, and to refresh themselves spiritually and physically in Nature (Gros 25). Thoreau, that day in the Lyceum, self-admittedly took an "extreme" stand to spare a thought for nature. His appeal to the masses was laughed at and ridiculed. Thoreau writes,

> I wish to speak a word for Nature, for absolute freedom and wildness, as contrasted with a freedom and culture merely civil–to regard man as an inhabitant, or a part and parcel of Nature, rather than a member of society. I wish to make an extreme statement, if so I may make an emphatic one, for there are enough champions of civilization: the minister and the school committee and every one of you will take care of that. (Scott 1)

This section critically examines how in his writing, Thoreau eloquently and forcefully made his advocacy for nature a political one. The preservation of wilderness entwined with this political dimension is the more prominent theme in my thesis, apart from its ecocritical design. The second chapter, titled "Henry David Thoreau," dwells on the various texts of Thoreau that make evident his political and socio-economic sensibilities. As mentioned earlier, the thread of radicality has been given a particular focus in Thoreau's politics along with the well-known traits of Thoreau's philosophy, his idea of the "spirit," the self, and how Transcendentalism helps one to commune with nature. It discusses the legacy of Thoreau regarding wilderness conservation and ecological consciousness. In doing this, the socio-political peculiarities of American life become evident. In what could be eerily and immediately relatable for contemporary Americans and Indians alike, hopelessness and sadness raise their heads repeatedly in Thoreau's writings. Individuals and institutions are held responsible for the corruption and failure of institutions through their moral corruption in his journals. Like Marx, Thoreau is also sensitive to the idea of

one's conscience and how its corruption is related to one's distance from Nature or wilderness (Shepard 60).

The chapter also discusses how in the 1840s and the 1850s, Thoreau's writings were punctuated by political agenda. The *Walden* chapter called "The Village" describes his night in jail and the reasons behind it, namely that he did not want to recognize the authority of a state that bought and sold men, women, and children "like cattle" at the door of its senate-house (*Thoreau, Walden and Civil Disobedience* 4). In "Baker Farm," he writes that "the only true America" is "where the state does not endeavour to compel you to sustain . . . slavery and war and other superfluous expenses (5)." His reference here is to the Mexican War, one of the most unjust wars in American history. These passages in Walden connect the fight against slavery with resistance to War and imperialism. During this period Thoreau's family home, which his parents and two sisters shared, was "a nest of Abolitionists," as reported by a contemporary:

> "Rarely a week went by without some fugitive being harboured overnight in town and sped along his way before daylight. Henry Thoreau, more than any other man in Concord, looked after them . . . [by] purchasing their tickets, escorting them to the [train] station," and so forth.(6)

The chapter also discusses how as a social reformer whose words echo the principles on which the United States was founded — Thoreau's writings influenced Mahatma Gandhi's work in India, Leo Tolstoy's philosophy and literature in Russia, and Martin Luther King's civil rights stand in the United States.

3. John Muir

The second chapter "John Muir," discusses the spirit of adventure and exploration that Muir represented. It also focuses on his biocentric and eco-anarchist ethic. He realised that anthropocentrism was a selfish enterprise, just like the organised religion that had given birth to it. He embraces the philosophy that "everything that exists flows into everything else" (Mighetto and Cohen 59). In support of this are his various writings. I give an account of one of his earliest stories, "Stickeen," written in 1920. In the story, Muir and his dog Stickeen are on their way back to a snowy mountain camp at the end of the day. While on their way they come across a deep crevasse.

A fragile and torturous snowbridge about forty feet in length will lead them to the other side and their camp. It is Muir first step-cutting his way to the other side, which he describes as the most demanding forty feet of his mountaineering life. Now the dog must cross over. Since the dawn, the dog had immensely impressed Muir with his skill on all kinds of terrain and, more so, with a stark independent stoicism. Hesitation builds in and takes the form of fear in both dog and man. The little dog paces back and forth, staring into the deep dark abyss, and howls with anxiety. At length, after much calling and encouragement, he takes one brave step down to the bridge and races up to the other side where Muir awaits. The triumph drives them both to ecstasy and a kind of spiritual union in the stark, icy, white vastness. They then make their last stretch to the camp where their companions, who have "lost hope," rejoice as they emerge (776). Muir attributes human feelings to the dog, especially in the face of death, as both dog and man have to jump across the crevasse to get to the safety of their camp. Muir's writing reflects the

humanitarian concerns beginning to burgeon, though not very popular at that time. In this story and elsewhere he attributes personality to non-human entities.

The years in which he existed, his beliefs, and his temperament make him a fascinating amalgamation of several different characteristics. He existed in an America which was a mixture of transcendentalists and humanists. Thoreau, Emerson, and Darwin very much influenced him. Therefore, his writing (recorded catalogues of nature or flora and fauna around him in his many journeys) exhibits scientific learning and attitude. The chapter analyses his works *A Thousand Mile Walk, The Cruise of the Corwin, Travels in Alaska,* and *The Story of my Boyhood and Youth*. The chapter then moves to his environmental aesthetics and concludes how radical the change in his perspective was compared to his childhood education. Muir saw the nobleness of character in both man and animal, even after the widespread pessimism that Darwinism had brought all around. Of course, Muir had done this by retaining a certain degree of divinity as a source of all life on Earth. Incidentally, this philosophy led him to believe in the equal worth of all life forms. His was a guided evolution, with a Godhead still in command. It was in the tradition of the Romantics before him; there was indeed an ever-evolving chain of life, but there was some hidden truth to the interlinking of all these and the non-living entities. This effectively led to the Transcendental way of thinking, which espoused the current science and divine provenance. The pioneer in this philosophy, Emerson, wrote,

> The universe is represented in every one of its particles. Everything in nature contains all the powers of nature. Everything is made of one hidden stuff; the naturalist sees one type under every metamorphosis and regards a horse as a running man, a fish as a swimming man, a bird as a flying man and a tree as a rooted man. Each new form repeats the

> character of the type, but part for part all the details, all the aims, furtherances, hindrances, energies, and the whole system of every other. (Emerson 269)

The imagery of smooth metamorphoses can be found in other Transcendentalist texts too. Muir also alluded to the blurring of distinctions between species and asserted his biocentric view of life in the universe. Muir effectively achieves what modern eco-translators call precisely that, eco-translation. His master decodes Stickeen's feelings and emotions, and through his words, we empathise with the dog. One of the concerns of modern ecological activists who voice concern for animal liberation is the inhuman responses to the plight of different groups as a factor of the widening of the moral source of the problem. If we can bridge this divide somehow between us and non-human species or even those human cultures we have not yet translated; we could find the kind of nature stewardship stories and values which would inspire us to the stewardship of the wilderness. Animals are equally important as we share the planet with an astounding number of domesticated animals we depend upon. Muir is one of the pioneers of extending this moral value as well as an equal place alongside man, unlike the anthropomorphic ideology of his time. Muir is an early example of an individual contributing to this cultural change and environmental concern that Buell talks of as the contributions of the humanities. Muir's biocentrism answers this by accrediting value to all living and nonliving elements found on this sphere called the Earth.

4. Edward Abbey

Edward Abbey is the only writer among these three central subjects of this study who engages in pure fiction, the genre of the novel. The fourth chapter, "Edward Abbey," details his non-conventional sensibilities as evidenced in his work *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the*

Wilderness (1968) an account of his stint as a park ranger in Arches National Park in a significant way, his novel *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975), and some of his critical essays and minor novels. Abbey specialises in the trope of the lean, unkempt, grumpy individual who has no concept of technological or scientific advancement but harbours a profound, inherent attachment to his land and the nature surrounding him. He also revels in the genre of the anti-machine and anti-state actors secretly plotting against the State, which does not respect the freedom and the autonomy of the people and has no love for the natural world. I discuss Abbey's *The Monkey Wrench Gang* (1975) as a work representing subversion of the State, and resisting technology as the destroyer of nature and personal freedom. It is an essential ecocritical work and illustrates radical ways of countering State-power. As such, the methods of the band of renegades (the protagonists) sprout from anarchistic ideologies of dissent, freethought, and freedom from corporatist chokehold on the individual and nature. As regional voices are ignored in favour of growth and development, responsibility and direct action are the only options available to the characters who emerge as eco-defenders of their territories– fearless heroes and heroines risking their lives. This chapter analyses the aesthetics of dissent and direct action through the philosophy of Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. This sheds light on Abbey's irreverence of convention and undying optimism. Abbey as an individual and his writings thus form a whole, a unique site where several radical ideologies meet. But rather than reducing him to certain "isms" that he would have despised, the beauty lies in the extraordinary consistency of his aesthetics and lifelong struggle, which can be crystallised into a single word – "freedom." Freedom from judgments and prejudices, freedom of man and nature from State oppression, and freedom to do as one wishes. This chapter presents a short textual-philosophical analysis of Abbey's wilderness aesthetics—a different perception of another dry and unforgiving wilderness. His aesthetics are

deeply rooted in the neutrality of wilderness which gives it its political use as an unbiased sanctuary. In continuation of the above anthropocentric purpose or hope of wilderness for its political sanctuary from the despotic State, this section consists of the aspect of detached spiritual sanctuary. (Mumford 32)

5. Writings From the Subcontinent

The penultimate (and the fifth chapter) is about a select group of texts from India and Nepal. These countries have a rich literary history, mythology, and diversity of multilingual literature. This section presents some select texts which evidence individuality and non-conventional ecological awareness and conservation action. *Gift in Green* (2001) by Sarah Joseph is a novel set in a primordial little fictional village in the backwaters of Kerala. In the book, the gradual decline in the way of life and land is poignantly depicted in what resembles the numerous exodus of people from their ancestral lands due to environmental catastrophes and technocratic takeover. *Gift in Green* presents a unique realm where idyllic nature is the only source of livelihood. Thus is presented an old way of life where humans still know how to respect and take care of nature. This results in an exciting study of the nature-human relationship. I analyse this novel in light of present environmental justice crises, debates, and eco-feminist impulses central to the narrative. *Slowly Dies a Lake* (2020) is another water tale, an eco-memoir woven around a vast lake on the edge of a forest in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Akkineni Kutumbarao translates in words the actual life events of the village Pulaparru and the lake Kolleru — “All the people in it [the village] are real. The village is authentic. Kolleru is real” (Kutumbarao xxii). The novel weaves a story with scattered vignettes of multiple families and characters connected through a single thread of existence — living off the land. Life in Pulaparru village revolves around the fowl and

cattle, the crops, and the trees. The lake hangs serenely in the background yet looms large in the characters' psyche — through traditions, language, and daily constructs. The benign lake, providing water and foraging to humans and non-humans, frequently overflows into threatening floods. We are told in the beginning that standing on the banks of the present-day lake Kolleru, sixty-five-year-old Srinivasa Rao alias Seenu remembers the chronicles of the lake and the lake village of his childhood sixty years ago. Thus this is an eco-memoir of how the lake slowly dies after being taken over by the government and the corporate world, in a bid to develop it as a resource for monetary profit.

The writer, in the preface, confesses that though conceived in 1973 and narrating a tale of a time when India was young (in the period of 1947-1950), it was finally put down in words in the year 2013. The confession also carries a heavy sense of moral responsibility, which haunted him throughout these long decades — a moral sense that history ought to be narrated. He echoes Carey Wolfe when he writes in the prefatic opening that people should "at least be aware of the condition to which it had deteriorated. The ills that befell Kolleru must at least be documented and remembered (xxii)." He echoes James Hatley's melancholia in the latter's comment on the extinct Honshu wolf of Japan that the animal should not have disappeared without anyone knowing it; it should have mattered to the human when the creature ceased to exist. The ethical concern in the novel over the disappearance and misuse of non-human surfaces only in the last couple of pages of the whole story. The remembrance, like the narrator, omniscient but analogous to Seenu's childhood persona, comes back to the present in these pages with Seenu standing indignantly and surveying the lurid gothic of the present.

Purnachandra Tejaswi's *Carvalho* depicts a fictional village where a group of individuals from diverse backgrounds go on a quest to find an endangered creature. The story reveals the

relationship of different characters with nature, their position in a hierarchical, gendered, and casteist society. It raises questions on the roles ascribed to people and their treatment on the basis of their occupations and social standing. Interspersed with humour, we find deep philosophical questions of existence, not only as humans but as creatures of other species. One of these questions is the utilitarian attitude that the scientific community has towards animals, and the ethical values related to it. In Purnachandra Tejaswi's story, the natural environment is not directly portrayed as being threatened, and there are no dramatic descriptions of widespread deforestation, waste dumps, or mining activities. *Carvalho* is a social ecological imagination that exposes the relationship of very different personalities to wilderness and wildlife. The lives of ecosystem people and their perceptions and intuitions are contrasted humorously with members of the highly educated class. Through just one small and rare creature, it brings into relief our treatment and speciesistic treatment of non-human species. It also through a simple narrative has a capacity to magnify the various codependent relationships of various species in the wilderness that we seldom encounter but those that are integral to our very own survival, as well as the collective survival and evolution of all life on the planet.

Nepalese author Bishweshwor Prasad Koirala's novel *Sumnima* (1969), initially published in the Nepali language, is a age story of a young adult Brahmin boy who encounters an indigenous adolescent female in the forest where he leads his cattle every day from his father's ashram. The girl belongs to the Kiraant tribal community, whose ancestors have been living off the land in the Western Himalayan ranges since ancient times. The novel juxtaposes the free spirit and uninhibited sensuality of the innocent young "daughter of the forest" against a strung-up and ultra- reserved adolescent boy of the higher caste. The Kiraanti people's ways of life act as a foil against the presumptions and prejudices of the high-borne boy and his family

and community. The gradual and inevitable unstringing of the boy in the girl's company is of a cathartic and liberating nature. Koirala weaves a world of reality with dream-like sequences and unworldly topography as a representation of the inner psyche, torturous, perilous, and labyrinthine. The magical world in which the magical girl leads the boy saves him from immediate spiritual and moral annihilation.

This study uncovers the distinct yet interconnected ways in which different cultural contexts shape ecological consciousness and activism by examining American and Indian environmental literature. By juxtaposing the radical environmentalism of Thoreau, Muir, and Abbey with the regional ecological narratives of Indian writers like Sarah Joseph, Akinneni Kutumbarao, K.P. Purnachandra Tejasvi, and B.P. Koirala, the study reveals how cultural, spiritual, and socio-political factors influence literary representations of nature. This focus enriches the understanding of the historiography of environmental thought and highlights the global diversity in environmental ethics and activism. Furthermore, the thesis introduces novel theoretical insights by integrating Marx's concept of alienation, Foucault's theory of control societies, and Deleuze and Guattari's concept of realising one's desire and resistance in society into the analysis of environmental literature. These frameworks provide new perspectives for interpreting the intersection of ecological and social justice issues. This interdisciplinary approach expands the scope of environmental literary studies and provides valuable perspectives for future research in global environmentalism. This thesis pioneers a comprehensive exploration of American and Indian environmental thought and literature, uncovering diverse perspectives and insights that enrich our understanding of ecological consciousness and activism across continents.

7. Conclusion

This doctoral thesis offers a comprehensive exploration of the evolution of environmentalism in literature, juxtaposing the works of pivotal American writers Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, and Edward Abbey with those of significant Indian authors Sarah Joseph, Akinneni Kutumbarao, K.P. Purnachandra Tejasvi, and B.P. Koirala. By tracing the historiography of American environmental writing from the early nineteenth to the twentieth century, the study elucidates how Thoreau's transcendental reflections, Muir's conservationist fervour, and Abbey's radical activism collectively shaped the American environmental consciousness. In stark contrast, the selected Indian authors foreground ecological concerns within the contexts of community, spirituality, and socio-political struggles, reflecting the unique environmental challenges and cultural narratives of the Global South.

The historiography reveals that while American environmentalism, as depicted by Thoreau, Muir, and Abbey, often emphasises individualism, wilderness preservation, and direct activism against industrial encroachment, Indian environmental literature tends to focus more on communal harmony with nature, the spiritual dimensions of ecological balance, and the socio-economic impacts of environmental degradation. This contrast underscores different cultural approaches to environmentalism: the American emphasis on radical individual action versus the Indian emphasis on community and spiritual integration.

Future research stemming from this thesis could delve deeper into comparative studies between other Western and non-Western environmental literatures, explore the influence of indigenous narratives on environmental thought, or investigate the impact of contemporary

global environmental movements on regional literatures. Such studies would contribute to a richer, more diverse understanding of global environmentalism and its literary expressions.

The importance of this study lies in its interdisciplinary approach, bridging literary analysis, environmental history, and political theory to offer a holistic view of how literature not only reflects but also shapes ecological consciousness and activism. By highlighting the diverse ways in which different cultures engage with environmental issues, this research underscores the necessity of global perspectives in addressing the pressing environmental challenges of our time.

Research Scholar Research Guide

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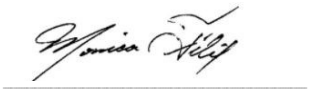

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Introduction

In Western cultures, the ideal of feminine appearance has traditionally included long, flowing hair, clear skin, a narrow waist, and little or no body hair or facial hair. In other cultures, however, some expectations are different. For example, in many parts of the world, underarm hair is not considered unfeminine. Today, the color pink is strongly associated with femininity, whereas in the early 1900s pink was associated with boys and blue with girls. These feminine ideals of beauty have been criticized as restrictive, unhealthy, and even racist. In particular, the prevalence of anorexia and other eating disorders in Western countries has frequently been blamed on the modern feminine ideal of thinness. In many Muslim countries, women are required to cover their heads with a hijab (veil). It is considered a symbol of feminine modesty and morality. Some, however, see it as a symbol of objectification and oppression. Women have to train how to make a space for them where they can develop and turn into the people they need to be. A woman can enjoy her life is the point at which they have the opportunity and freedom to settle on their own choices. It incorporates increasing women's sense of her dynamic decision-making power to access opportunities and resources, her power and authority over her own life inside and outside the home, and her capacity to impact change. Women have to gain control over their own lives.

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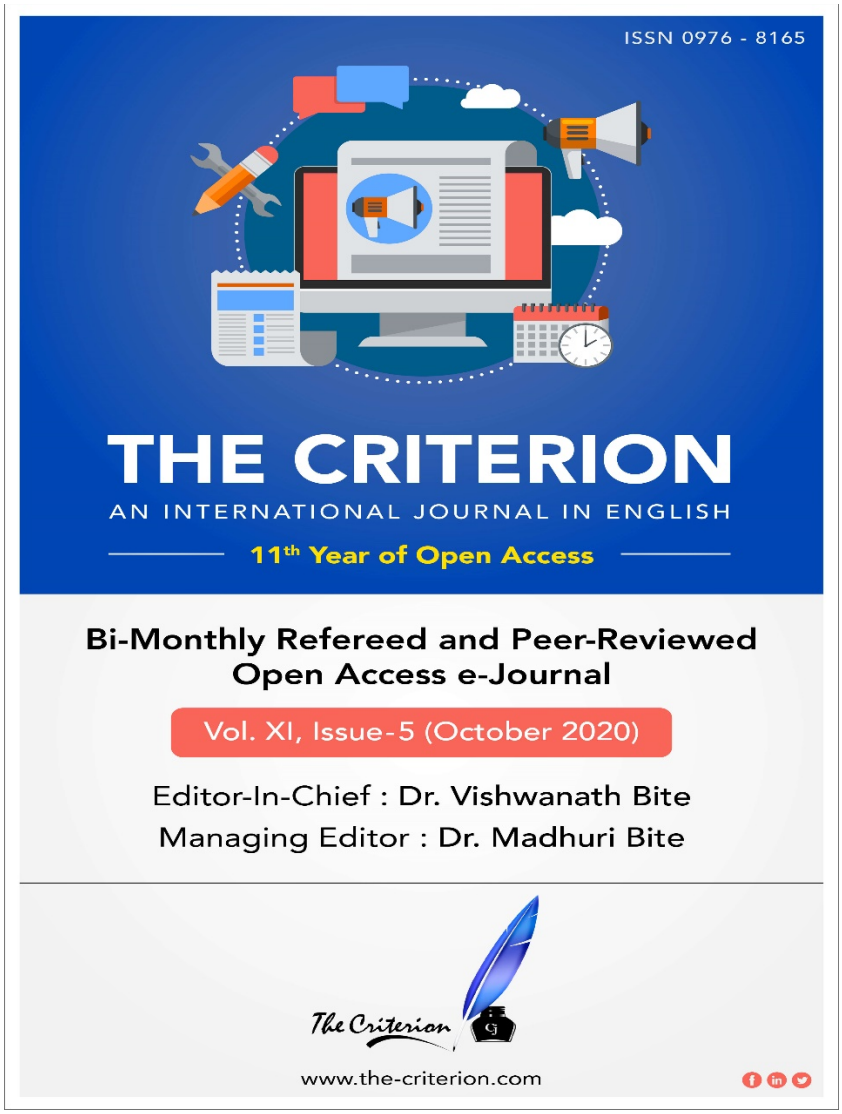

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Towards a New Ecological Discourse: *Translating Knowledge into Agency*

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Abstract:

Stimulating effective communication between activists and scholars of various disciplines of study to combat climate crises, and directing the effort towards minimizing the gap between *theory* and *praxis* is the theme of this article. I list some ways in which literature and linguistics can provide tools for better communication and dissemination of knowledge. Based on how the opinion is molded and narratives shifted by the centers of power, the article recommends radical changes in our worldview as a first step to affect a much-needed shift in thinking and action.

Keywords: agency, ecology, communication, hegemony, media, rethinking theory.

Introduction

Environmental scholars and activists centered in and around the field of literature have always been looking to expand and increase the purview of their literary, critical, political and social concerns. Environmental humanities as a discipline bridges the distance between humanities and other subjects of study as well as the whole of academia and the general public. The focus now is to meet the ecological challenge proactively and to come up with solutions and policy suggestions in co-operation with natural sciences and all available wisdom.

Speaking about action on climate change, Hans Joachim Schellnhuber, an atmospheric physicist and climatologist observed in 2009 that “social scientists” had to do more heavy lifting when it came to climate change. “Speaking as a natural scientist,”